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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VATICAN 000210

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SUBJECT: INDONESIAN-VATICAN RELATIONS: A BUMP IN THE ROAD

REF: A. VATICAN 208

[1](#)B. VATICAN 207

[1](#)C. VATICAN 206 ET AL.

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CLASSIFIED BY: Peter Martin, Pol/Econ Chief, Vatican, State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Indonesian Ambassador Prayitno told Ambassador Rooney recently that he was optimistic about Indonesian - Holy See relations despite the recent papal flap and the execution of three Catholics there. He said that despite numerous entreaties by the Vatican, there was never any chance that the executions would be halted. For his part, Holy See Country Director for Indonesia Luis Montemayor (protect) told us in confidence that he never expected the Indonesians to bend on the issue, but that the appeals were important to make a statement about the death penalty and treatment of minorities. Another contact with missionary experience in Indonesia was hopeful about the well-being of the Christian community in Indonesia, but concerned about circumstances surrounding the executions. In all, recent events seem to have been no more than a bump in the road for Holy See - Indonesian relations and the Holy See is maintaining its keen interest in the country. End Summary.

Ambassador Prayitno Optimistic

[1](#)2. (C) Indonesian Ambassador Bambang Prayitno told the Ambassador recently that he was optimistic about Indonesian - Holy See relations. Ref (a) detailed the reactions of Prayitno and several other Muslim ambassadors here to the papal comments in Regensburg. He also discussed with the Ambassador the recent execution of three Catholics in Indonesia, the subject of a personal appeal by the pope and, according to Prayitno, at least six written or oral entreaties by the Vatican to stop the

executions. According to Prayitno, there was never any chance that the executions would be halted. The trials were conducted fairly and legally, he said, and made it clear that the Catholics' fate was not unrelated to that of the Bali bombers.

Appeals Were a Statement

13. (C) Holy See Country Director for Indonesia Luis Montemayor (protect) told us in confidence September 25 that even with the appeals by the Vatican, he never expected the Indonesians to bend on the issue. Once there was confirmation of the sentence by a high court, he said, the Vatican's efforts were more to make a point about the treatment of the Christian minority, and hopefully improve the situation for the future. Montemayor was somewhat critical of the Indonesian government's treatment of Christians, but was not unduly pessimistic about the future of relations. "This is not Saudi Arabia," he said. "There are some issues, but we will continue working on them."

Priest Concerned About Executions

14. (C) Fr. Sylwester Pajak, a Polish priest of the Catholic order of the Divine Word Missionaries who spent 26 years in Indonesia and now teaches at a pontifical university in Rome, shared a "general hopefulness" about the well-being of Christians in Indonesia, but was still very upset about the

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executions. [Note: Pajak is nominally the ecclesiastical advisor to the Indonesian Embassy (many embassies to the Holy See employ a member of the clergy in that capacity), but said he is consulted only sparingly these days. He alluded vaguely to a less receptive atmosphere in the Indonesian Embassy to his work in recent years.] Regarding the executions, he charged that the Catholics had not had the opportunity to receive Communion just before they died, and was generally critical of their trial and the sentence's effects on the Indonesian Christian community. He also noted media reports that the bodies of the three men exhibited signs of abuse.

Comment

15. (C) Recent events seem to have been no more than a bump in the road for Holy See - Indonesian relations. Prayitno repeated praise we have heard for new Papal Nuncio to Indonesia Leonardo Girelli, and implied that the executions had not strained relations between the two sides in Jakarta. Montemayor underlined the importance of Indonesia to the Holy See, both because of its Christian minority and because of its pivotal role in the Muslim world.

ROONEY